

Vol. 7

1954

Price 4/-

# *the Sea Swallow*



BEING THE ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE ROYAL NAVAL  
BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

Published December, 1954.

# ROYAL NAVAL BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY.

(Affiliated to the British Trust for Ornithology)

— : O : —

## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

1954

### *President :*

Vice-Admiral THE MACKINTOSH OF MACKINTOSH, C.B., D.S.O.,  
D.S.C.

### *Vice-Presidents :*

Vice-Admiral G. M. B. LANGLEY, C.B., O.B.E.

Dame VERA LAUGHTON MATTHEWS, D.B.E.

Lieutenant-Commander PETER M. SCOTT, M.B.E., D.S.C.,\*  
R.N.V.R.

### *Chairman :*

Captain G. S. TUCK, D.S.O., R.N. (retd.).

### *Vice-Chairman :*

Captain R. CASEMENT, O.B.E., R.N.

### *Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer :*

Commander (S) C. E. SMITH, R.N.

### *Editorial and Advisory Committee :*

Surgeon Lieutenant N. RANKIN, R.N.V.R.

Lieutenant A. GILPIN, R.N.V.R.

Lieutenant E. A. G. DUFFEY, R.N.V.R.

Captain B. JEANS, R.M. (retd.).

Major N. A. G. H. BEAL, R.M. (retd.).

Cd. Engr. N. C. WAIN, R.N.

---

The following Ornithologists have kindly consented to assist the  
Society in an advisory capacity :—

W. B. ALEXANDER, M.A., M.B.O.U.

Professor V. C. WYNNE-EDWARDS, M.B.O.U., A.O.U.

Doctor B. B. ROBERTS, M.B.O.U.

E. M. NICHOLSON, C.B., M.B.O.U.

J. FISHER, M.B.O.U.

D. WATKINS-PITCHFORD, F.R.S.A., A.R.C.A.

R. M. LOCKLEY.

---

### *Hon. Auditor :*

R. PEGLER, A.C.A.

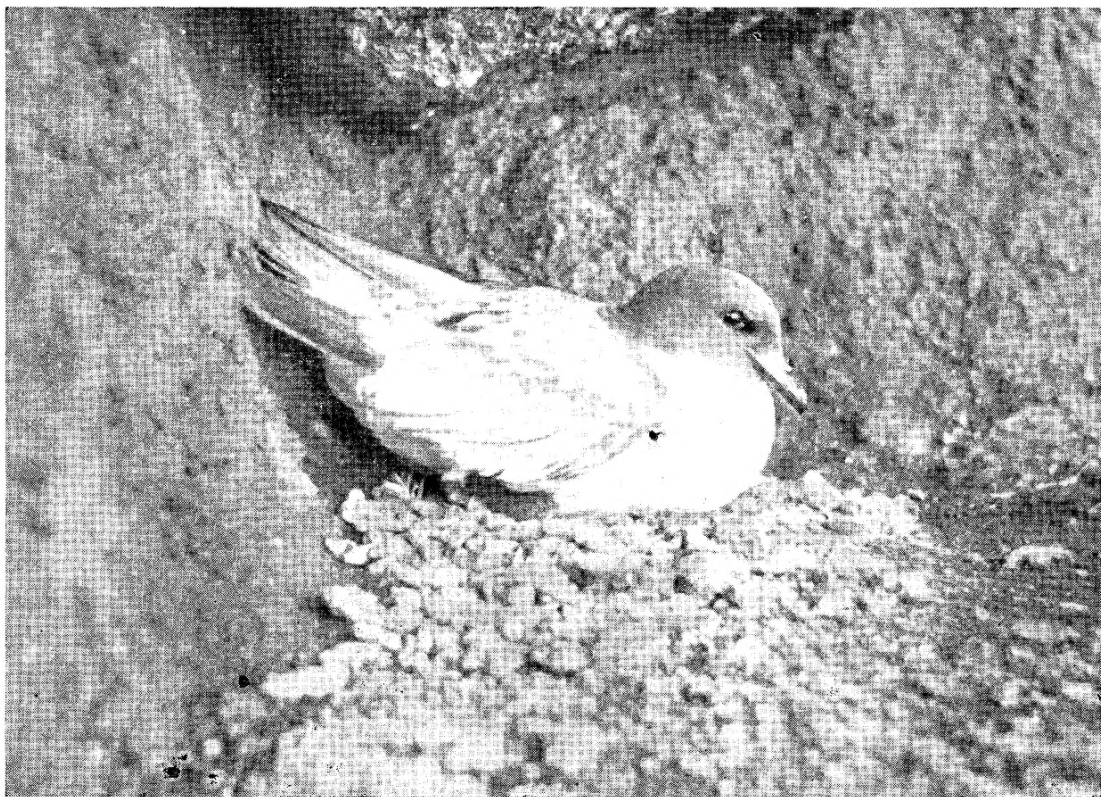
### *Bankers :*

LLOYDS BANK LTD., 6 Pall Mall, London, S.W.1.

# CONTENTS.

—:O:—

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL	<i>Inside Cover</i>
FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT	<i>Page</i> 3
EDITORIAL	4
SEA REPORT SHEETS RECEIVED 1953/54	6
NOTES ON SEA REPORTS	7
OCEAN PASSAGES	9
RANDOM REPORTS FROM THE OCEANS	12
THE LARGER SHEARWATERS OF THE EASTERN NORTH ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN	15
JOY OF WADERS By Commander C. E. Hamond, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.	17
THE WANDERING ALBATROSS—SOME NOTES ON IT'S CAPTURE. By Lt.-Commander G. S. Willis, R.N.R.	20
BOOK REVIEW	23
NOTES RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS	24
R.N.B.W.S. REFERENCE BOOK LIST (REVISED 1954)	25
LIST OF MEMBERS	27
R.N.B.W.S. REVISED SEA REPORT SHEET	35
JOINING FORM	37
BANKER'S ORDER FORM FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS	39



CAPE PIGEON OR PINTADO PETREL.

*Photograph by Capt. E. D. Stroud, R.M.*

## FOREWORD.

---

I think we can claim that the R.N.B.W.S. has had a successful year and is achieving its objects.

The Society's finances remain on a sound though modest footing, and a small number of new members have joined. We welcome the election of new members of the R.N.R. serving in Her Majesty's Merchant Navy.

A very healthy sign during 1954 has been the marked increase in the reporting of birds observed at sea by members, and the many interesting reports received from Merchant Ships through the Marine Office of the Air Ministry Meteorological Office. I understand that our Editor has been faced with a "bewilderment of birds," but has identified successfully such unexpected ship visitors as the Grey Hooded Kingfisher, the African Racquet Tailed Roller, a Snowy Owl, and a Golden Plover amongst other queries received.

The Seafarers' Education Service and College of the Sea is also alive to the possibilities of fostering interest in birds at sea in the Merchant Navy, and here again is a field in which the R.N.B.W.S. may be able to help.

I would like to thank all those who sent paintings and photographs and gave their time in arranging the display organised by R.N.B.W.S. in December, 1953. These pictures gave enjoyment to a great many members in the Admiralty. The Society is grateful to the Admiralty for its ready co-operation in providing the site for the display.

Again we must thank Captain Tuck for the phenomenal work he puts into the R.N.B.W.S., which is increasing with the more sea reports coming in. However the more reports he receives the better he is pleased.

I hope we may continue the good progress in 1955.

*Lauchlan Mackintosh of Mackintosh*

---

MOY HALL, MOY,  
INVERNESSHIRE.

*November, 1954.*

## EDITORIAL.

---

### STATE OF SOCIETY.

On retirement from the Active List Captain H. A. Traill, C.B.E., R.N., our Vice-Chairman for several years, has been replaced by Captain R. Casement, O.B.E., R.N. We would like to place on record our appreciation of Captain Traill's work for the Society, and our thanks to Captain Casement for agreeing to serve as our new Vice-Chairman.

Membership of the Society is being maintained. We feel certain however that if the details of the Society were brought home more frequently to eligible members, and here we refer particularly to the younger Officers and Ratings in the Royal Navy and its Reserves, that more members would join. The most effective way to achieve this is through the medium of existing members, particularly members on the Active List. Spare copies of this Annual Report are held by the Editor should any member wish for an additional copy to circulate within his ship or establishment. These can be obtained at cost price.

In this respect one of the best Sea Passage Reports received this year, covering a passage of 14,000 miles, was compiled by a group of O.O.W's. who had no official connection with the Society.

We think that a keen member must have left his ornithological mark in the ship, as the official R.N.B.W.S. forms were used. We were delighted to receive this report. Well done H.M.S. Newcastle !

### 1954 ANNUAL REPORT.

This year more space has been given to publishing extracts from Sea Passage Reports and reports received from the Masters of Merchant Ships. We are grateful for the latter which enlarge considerably the ocean areas from which information is received.

Little information has been forthcoming from the Home Station, and we should like to receive more.

### REVISED SEA REPORT SHEET.

A specimen copy is printed, and columns provided to assist in identification. Under columns 9, 10 and 11 the information can be recorded by using the first letter of the sub-heading, e.g.—

Positive—P.      Adult—A, etc.

### B.T.O. NEST RECORD CARDS.

Any member who has completed cards for 1954 is requested to send these to the Editor as soon as possible.

*Four*

## TELESCOPIC NEST OBSERVATION MIRROR.

In connection with the nest record scheme Messrs. Watkins and Doncaster, Taxidermists, 36 Strand, London, W.C.2. now sell a most handy device for inspecting the interior of nests. It consists of an aluminium telescopic rod which extends from about 12 inches (closed) to 7 ft. 6 ins. (open) and is fitted with a tilting mirror at the end. When one includes the height of one's body and extended arm nests at considerable heights can be inspected. The price is 26/- (27/6d. post free).

### **New Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.**

In view of the difficulties attached to the work of the Society with our Hon. Sec. in South Africa, Lt. Critchley has relinquished his post and Commander (S) C. E. Smith, R.N. has kindly consented to assume these duties.

As from the receipt of this report all members are requested to correspond direct with our new Hon. Secretary and Treasurer

**Commander (S) C. E. Smith, R.N.,  
H.M.S. "Ceres,"  
Wetherby,  
Yorkshire.**

Please send your subscriptions (due on 1st January, 1955), direct to the new Hon. Treasurer if you have not already paid your subscription.

G. S. TUCK.  
28/12/54.

## SEA REPORT SHEETS.

(Received 1953/54).

A great deal of interesting information has been received this year, several reports covering long ocean passages. Analysis has been made easier by the obvious attention that has been paid in many cases to indicating the reliability of identification, and by useful amplifying remarks.

In making use of reports so far as plotting on ocean distribution charts is concerned, details of the wind and weather conditions are of subsidiary importance compared with identification data.

For this reason the standard R.N.B.W.S. Sea Report Sheet has been revised, and the new form is shown in this report. In future Members are asked to forward sea reports in accordance with the headings shown in the new form.

Apart from passage reports received from members since the 1953 annual report, and acknowledged below, we are very grateful for individual reports received, and for the many reports from Officers of the Merchant Navy received from the Air Ministry Meteorological Office.

### NORTH SEA.

Lt.-Cdr. G. S. Willis, R.N.R.

*July/Aug.*—U.K. to Kattegat, Sweden and Norway. (53 reports).

### BAY OF BISCAY AREA

Lt.-Cdr. G. S. Willis, R.N.R.

*Aug.*—Biscay to Cape St. Vincent.

### MEDITERRANEAN

Lt. P. J. S. Smith, R.M.

*Sept.*—Port Said to Piraeus and return (47 reports).

### ARABIAN SEA/INDIAN OCEAN

Lt. D. H. C. Lowis, R.N.

*Jan./June.*—Basra to Aden Coastal.  
Zanzibar and Seychelles.  
(52 reports).

### OCEAN PASSAGES.

Abel Seaman R. Gibb

Lt.-Cdr. A. S. Tyers, R.N.

*June/July.*—Singapore to U.K.  
*Mar./May.*—Simonstown to U.K. under tow.—6,000 miles.

Officers—H.M.S. Newcastle

Lt. M. N. Watson, R.N.

*Apr./June*—Hong Kong to U.K. via Honolulu and Panama.—14,000 miles.

Senior Cd.-Engr. W. E. Glass,  
R.N.

Lt. D. H. C. Lowis, R.N.

*Sept./Oct.*—U.K. to Singapore.

*Nov./Dec.*—Gibraltar to Gulf of Oman. (21 reports).



Lt.-Cdr. G. S. Willis, R.N.R.

Jan./Feb.—Gibraltar to Canary  
Isles. Gibraltar to Persian  
Gulf. (77 reports).

Lt.-Cdr. G. S. Willis, R.N.R.

Oct./Nov. — Persian Gulf to  
Adelaide, Australia and  
return. (117 reports).

Lt. P. J. S. Smith, R.M.

Feb./Mar. — Port Said to  
Cyprus. Cyprus to Malta.

## NOTES ON SEA REPORTS.

### NORTH SEA AND SCANDINAVIAN PORTS IN JULY AND AUGUST.

In the Kattegat, the Great Belt, and Swedish waters the Lesser Black Backed Gull, Herring and Common Gulls were most numerous in that order. Goosanders and Eider Ducks were also seen in the Kattegat. Further north, towards the latitude of Trondheim, Lesser Black Backed Gulls (probably the Scandinavian species) were most frequent. Fulmar Petrels (light phase), Kittiwakes, and Northern Gannets were seen regularly at sea. During the voyage a Redshank, Crossbill, and Starling settled on board.

### BAY OF BISCAY TO CAPE ST. VINCENT IN AUGUST.

Flocks of Shearwaters (20+), besides individual birds were seen throughout the area. These were identified as Great Shearwaters (*Procellaria gravis*) and North Atlantic or Cory's Shearwaters (*Procellaria diomedea*) in mixed flocks. Numbers of Storm Petrels followed the ship, reported as probably Wilson's Storm Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*). Two Turtle Doves settled on board. Curiously enough no gulls were seen.

### PORT SAID TO PIRAEUS AND RETURN IN SEPTEMBER.

This short passage follows a main migration route, though the first days of September were too early for the main surge of migrants. Lt. Smith, R.M., kept a very complete record, remaining on deck all the time (except for meals, when the O.O.W. called him up if any birds came in sight). Outward bound from Port Said on 1st, 2nd and 3rd September, several Hoopoes, a Turtle Dove, a common Whitethroat, Wheatear, and Willow Warbler settled on board. On the first day out a Squacco Heron flew alongside the bridge. A flock of eight Buzzards (possibly Honey Buzzards) and many Passerines were seen heading South. Lesser Black Backed Gulls and North Atlantic Shearwaters, Mediterranean sub species (*Procellaria diomedea diomedea*) were observed daily.

On the return passage, 9th to 11th September, once South of Cape Matapan, numbers of Swallows were seen flying South as

well as unidentified Buntings, Pipits and Larks. It is probable that the migration route keeps over land, until Cape Matapan is reached.

Amongst other birds identified were a Bluethroat a Purple Heron and a Glossy Ibis. All were heading southwards except the Glossy Ibis.

#### ARABIAN SEA COASTAL AREA, BASRA TO ADEN, ZANZIBAR AND SYCHELLES FROM JANUARY TO JUNE.

Lt. Lowis' report covers a period from 3rd January to 6th April in the Persian Gulf and Coastal area of Oman. From 6th April the report covers observations at sea southwards past the Gulf of Aden to Zanzibar and the Seychelles up to mid June.

In the very large number of separate reports made some light is thrown on the seasonal movements of the Gulls. One notes for example the very large flocks of Lesser Black Backed Gulls in the outer approaches to the Persian Gulf early in January. Flocks, of 200 to 500 of these gulls are seen resting on the water. At this time too many Indian Black Headed Gulls and Yellow Legged Gulls are in evidence. By the end of February, the large flocks of Lesser Black Backs have entirely disappeared, such birds as remain being mostly immature birds. Northern Black Headed Gulls have now largely replaced them.

As usual in the winter months, small flocks of Northern Red Necked Phalaropes occur in the approaches to the Gulf of Oman.

On 21st January, we find Kentish Plovers and Turnstones in winter dress feeding on the shore line at Jezirat Dalmah in the Persian Gulf, and a month later 30 Flamingoes on the mud flats. On 3rd April, Red Necked Phalaropes are still in the Gulf of Oman. This is the latest date at present recorded by R.N.B.W.S. for the area. At what date do the majority of these birds leave on their northern migration to their breeding grounds on the mosses of the far northern latitudes?

On 4th April, Lt. Lowis records ten Pomarine Jaegers in the Gulf.

During the passage Southwards from Masira Island on 5th April, Brown Winged Terns, Dusky Shearwaters, Blue Faced Boobies, Red billed Tropic Birds, Crested Terns, and Storm Petrels (probably Wilson's) are reported. South of the Gulf of Aden the Aden Gulls became more common, and in lat.  $2^{\circ} 30' N$ , long.  $46^{\circ} 30' E$  on 10th April, a solitary Northern Red Necked Phalarope was seen.

At Zanzibar in May the harbour was full of Crested Terns and Aden Gulls.

Off the Seychelles Isles, Wedge Tailed Shearwaters, and Sooty Terns were seen frequently.

*Eight*

## OCEAN PASSAGES.

### HONGKONG TO U.K. VIA PANAMA. APRIL TO JUNE.

During this long passage of 14,000 miles a continuous record of bird observations was kept by the Officers of the watch, organised by Lt. Watson.

Altogether 25 different species were positively identified, and great keenness was shown by the O.O.W. union. Lt. Watson writes "Alexander's admirable book "*Birds of the Ocean*" was the only reference book used throughout. Without it, the results obtained would have been quite impossible."

#### ALBATROSS NOTES :—

The Black Footed Albatross (*Diomedea nigripes*) was seen following the ship everyday from a position in the North Pacific 35 degrees North, 141 degrees East, about 50 miles east of Japan, on 28th April until the meridian of 150 degrees West was passed on 12th May. They were remarkably tame and flew within a few feet of the stern. Usually one or two were following at dawn, and numbers increased during the day until at sundown there were sometimes up to thirty following.

The Laysan Albatross (*Diomedea immutabilis*) was seen daily from about 900 miles east of Japan in 1st May until Honolulu was reached on 7th May. They were not nearly as tame as the Black Footed Albatross, and rarely came within 300 yards of the Ship.

#### THE WAVED ALBATROSS (*Diomedea irrorata*).

There was only one sighting in position 18 degrees North, 117 degrees West.

Some other records :—The C.-in-C., Far East Station, Admiral Sir Charles Lambe identified a Lesser Frigate Bird (*Fregata aerial*) in Tokio bay, and Captain Sir St. J. Tyrwhitt identified a White Bellied Storm Petrel (*Fregetta grallaria*) in 33 degrees N, 167 degrees E. During the voyage a Red Tailed Tropic Bird, a Red Footed Booby, a Blue Faced Booby, and a Swallow landed on board.

#### NORTHWARD FLIGHTS OF GREAT SHEARWATERS (*Procellaria gravis*).

When Newcastle was some 1,200 miles east of Florida on 1st June, a constant stream of these birds was seen passing close ahead of the ship at a rate of about one a minute. All were flying North with a fast purposeful flight.

(Note by Editor.—Here no doubt we see a glimpse of the northward migration, and dispersal into the North Atlantic of the Great Shearwater during the Southern winter).

## H.M.S. KEMPENFELT: SIMONSTOWN TO U.K. UNDER TOW. MARCH TO MAY.

Lt.-Cdr. A. S. Tyers, R.N., has sent an interesting report of the passage. On leaving Simonstown on 21st March, Sooty and Wandering Albatrosses were soon following astern. The last Albatross was seen on 31st March in latitude 20 degrees S.

The report is perhaps chiefly interesting for the record of sightings of Artic Skuas. One was seen off Simonstown, but it was not until 11th April, off Dakar, that any more were seen, and for the next four days Artic Skuas were often seen, and continued to be seen until just South of the Bay of Biscay. These birds were probably still working their way ever northwards to their ultimate breeding grounds.

## GIBRALTAR, CANARY ISLES, GIBRALTAR TO PERSIAN GULF IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY.

This report of Cdr. Willis's provides useful confirmation of the presence of various sea birds already plotted at this season. On 23rd January, two Northern Gannets were seen in the approaches to Port Said.

On 9th January, at sea, north of the Canary Islands, Lt.-Cdr. Willis had a clear and fairly close view of a bird whose identity we cannot place. Perhaps some members can help? Here is his description :—

Medium sized bird with a continuous flapping flight, which reminded me somewhat of a plover. It came down once to the surface and paddled water, but did not settle while picking up something. Description :—Bill black or very dark, short and appeared pointed. Head and face a dark brownish grey, streaked with yellow and what appeared to be some green. Mantle dark slate grey, mottled with brown and tinged chestnut. In certain lights this seemed to give a dark bottle green glint. Primaries dark grey, partly tinged brownish. A chestnut patch at base of rump and/or upper tail coverts. Tail white with a terminal black band.

(*Note by Editor.*—There is much in this description to suggest our common Lapwing, perhaps an immature bird, but there is also much at variance).

## PERSIAN GULF TO ADELAIDE AND RETURN IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER.

This is another excellent report by Cdr. Willis, and has given more useful data for the preparation of a Sea Passage List. The report contains 117 separate observations.

## SINGAPORE TO U.K. IN JUNE AND JULY.

Able Seaman Gibbs spent a great deal of time watching for birds throughout the passage and has prepared a very useful and full report. As in Cdr. Willis' report there is too much data to quote more than a few extracts.

During the passage through the Straits of Malacca, Lesser Frigate Birds and Brown Boobies figure chiefly. Off Colombo many Roseate Terns were seen together with Brown Winged Terns. During the passage of the Indian Ocean, Dusky Shearwaters, Wedge Tailed Shearwaters, and a Persian Shearwater were reported, and Red Billed Tropic Birds seen. From Aden onwards the report quotes many sightings which confirm present known data.

## GIBRALTAR TO GULF OF OMAN IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER.

Lt. Lewis' report provides no surprises. Again the comparative absence of sea birds in the Eastern Mediterranean is emphasised. During these winter months large numbers of Brown Winged Terns are ranging in the Gulf of Aden, and ten flocks of Red Necked Phalaropes were seen just east of Aden.

## RANDOM REPORTS FROM THE OCEANS.

### RINGING.

Lt.-Cdr. G. S. Willis, R.N.R., writes :—" I have been doing a little ringing for the Natural History Museum but how difficult it is to capture these sea birds ?"

However, after ringing three Wandering Albatrosses (*D. exulans*) and a Common Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) he continues, " I have since ringed a White faced Storm Petrel off the Australian coast, and a Sooty Tern and Red Footed Booby in the Indian Ocean. The Sooty Tern was extremely noisy about it all, and as it was ten at night when I got hold of him I was not too popular. I hoisted the unfortunate " Sooty " in a basket to the top of the signal halyard as I wanted to have a good look at him next day".

### AN ALBATROSS IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC.

Occurrences of Albatrosses in the North Atlantic are few and far between. In May, 1953, R.N.B.W.S. received two reports from a position 360 miles N.W. of the Azores pointing to such an occurrence.

The reports and our comments which were published in *The Marine Observer* are reproduced below :—

M. V. Armadale (Messrs. Trinder, Anderson and Co.), Captain I. S. Maclean.

On 14th May, 1953, in 40 degrees N., 35 degrees West, a large bird similar in size and appearance to an Albatross, except for colouring, made attempts to land on board, but was unable to do so owing to its size. Its wing span was 5 to 6 feet and the wings were narrow like those of an Albatross. The upper side of wings was dark brown, the underside white with dark wing tips. The body (upperside) slightly lighter brown than wings, whilst the underside was white except forward of wings where a light brown collar encircled the neck. Tail dark brown. The head was speckled white. The long beak was curved down at the end and pale pink in colour. The bird had the characteristic hump where the neck joins the body.

M. V. Britannic (Cunard line), Captain J. W. Caunce, R.D., R.N.R.

On 23rd May, 1953, in 40 degrees N., 50 degrees W., a large unidentified bird was observed. Its wing span was over 10 ft. by comparison with distance. Bill long and hooked with prominent vent near base. White head, slaty upper surface, whitish undersides with yellow legs. Possibly a yellow nosed Albatross.

*Comments by R.N.B.W.S.*—Albatrosses habitually follow ships and it is quite possible that these two reports were of the same bird.

After inspecting skins at the British Museum we are of the

opinion that these reports were indeed of a Black browed Albatross. This Albatross is a bird of the southern oceans, and its appearance must be considered exceptional. James Fisher and R. M. Lockley in their recent book "*Sea Birds*" quote nine previous known occurrences of the Black browed Albatross in the North Atlantic, one in the Arctic Circle. A bird identified as such was picked up in Cheshire two or three years ago.

#### A SWAN AT SEA.

At noon on 7th February, 1954, Captain D. F. Morgan, Master of M.V. Port Wyndham (Port Line Ltd.) noticed a large bird, first thought to be a goose, flying round the bows. The ship was 200 miles S.W. of Cape St. Vincent. It landed on the water and was seen to be an immature swan. After drifting astern of the vessel it took off in a southerly direction.

#### WILD DUCKS COME TO GRIEF.

S.S. Tongariro (New Zealand Shipping Co.) was on passage from Balboa to Sydney on 7th February, 1953, 500 miles S.W. of Panama. At 22.00 hrs. a flight of about 20 duck, flying very fast in a S.W. direction, struck the foremast and foremast rigging. Three were killed instantly and fell on deck. It was a clear starlit night but moonless.

#### REPORTS OF TROPIC BIRDS.

Able Seaman Slark has sent a report from H.M.S. Newfoundland covering the nursing back to full recovery over a period of 7 days of a Red Tailed Tropic Bird. It was found on board with a damaged wing 500 miles N.E. of Mauritius. Able Seaman Slark forced it to take drops of Cod liver oil and water, and a few pieces of raw fish for the first two days. By the third day its natural viciousness had disappeared, it was able to exercise its wing and was eating two raw fish a day. It made no attempt to leave the ship until the seventh day on arrival at Trincomalee.

Captain P.P.O. Harrison, M.V. Cumberland (Federal S.N. Co.) gives this account of food vomited by a Red Billed Tropic Bird. "The bird struck one of the alleyway rails at night and landed on deck. It was very fierce. On landing it vomited a flying fish about 8 inches long, and the sac of a small squid. This was followed by a complete squid about 6 inches long. The squid was quite intact, body sac, inky fluid, tentacles and all."

(*Note by Editor.*—Tropic Birds are much attracted by the glare of ships' lights and often come aboard. They strike viciously with their sharp beaks, and it is advisable to don engine room gloves before handling them).

## ARCTIC SKUAS AND FLYING FISH.

Lt. A. S. Tyers, R.N., writes :—" When H.M.S. Euryalus was off the West Coast of Africa shoals of flying fish were breaking surface and Arctic Skuas flying round at Bridge level. Whenever flying fish broke surface the Skuas would dive upon them, albeit with singularly little success. On my many trips off the West Coast with Skuas in company I have never seen them behave in this way before.

## HAWKS USING SHIPS AS VANTAGE POINTS FOR ATTACK

Instances have often been reported in the past, and Captain Harrison has added two more. The identity of the hawks has not been established. He writes that on 23rd April, 1953, when his ship was 70 miles S.S.W. of Cape Marcia (New Zealand), two hawks stayed with the ship all day, using the foremost yard arm as a perch. The victims of the attacks were Prions. The hawks worked together, swooping on either side of a flock, trying to isolate a single bird. Having thus succeeded, both hawks would swoop violently upon the isolated Prion. On one occasion a hawk was seen eating its prey in flight before returning to its perch to finish off the meal.

On 4th November, 1953, Captain Harrison, whose ship was now in the Eastern Mediterranean, writes of a hawk, possibly a lesser Kestrel, using the foremost as a vantage point. From here it swooped to capture a dragonfly, and later plummeted vertically in an attempt to capture a robin.



## THE LARGER SHEARWATERS OF THE EASTERN NORTH ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN.

One member who reports sighting what he considers was possibly a Cory's Shearwater (*Procellaria diomedea*) in the Skagerrak, 57° 40' N, 08° 10' E, on 22nd August, asks whether this is the same species as the Mediterranean Shearwater (*Puffinus Kulili*) given in W. B. Alexander's "*Birds of the Ocean*."

Some ambiguity may well exist, particularly to the enquiring amateur, in the classification of these large Shearwaters of the Eastern North Atlantic and Mediterranean. Sub species are now recognised and handbooks do not all use the same terminology.

There are four species of Shearwater liable to be seen in these areas.

### THE TWO LARGER SHEARWATERS.

(1) THE GREAT SHEARWATER (*Procellaria gravis*). This species may be seen in the North Atlantic in the summer and autumn. It is a migrant from the southern hemisphere, where it's sole breeding station in the world is the islands of Tristan da Cunha.

It occasionally penetrates into the Western Mediterranean.

A distinctive feature in its recognition is it's dark brown cap and sharp dividing line between the brown of the cap and the white of the sides of its neck and throat, showing almost as a white collar. It has a dark bill and legs, and there are no sub species. Alexander refers to it in his 1928 edition of "*Birds of the Ocean*" as the "Greater Shearwater."

Fisher and Lockley in their recent book "*Sea Birds*" prefer to call it the "Tristan Great Shearwater."

(2) THE NORTH ATLANTIC SHEARWATER, also known as CORY'S SHEARWATER (*Procellaria diomedea*). There are three sub species:

(a) *Procellaria diomedea borealis*.—This breeds on the islands of the eastern north Atlantic, north to the Azores, Salvage Isles, and Berlengas, off Portugal. This sub species ranges into the approaches to the English Channel, and sometimes much further north into the North Sea, in the late summer after its breeding season.

(b) *Procellaria diomedea diomedea*.—This breeds in the Mediterranean and is the commonest large Shearwater throughout the Mediterranean Sea.

(c) *Procellaria diomedea edwardsi*.—This sub species breeds and occurs in the area of the Cape Verde Islands.

*P. diomedea* is slightly larger than *P. gravis*, and may be distinguished from it by lacking the "capped" appearance. The

throat and sides of its neck are mottled with grey and show no sharp demarcation with the brown cap. Its belly is pure white, and its bill and feet yellow instead of a dark brown colour. The three sub species of *P. diomedea* are quite indistinguishable at sea.

Alexander refers to the species as a whole as the "Mediterranean Shearwater" (*Puffinus kukli*), and to *P. d. diomedea* as (*Puffinus k. kukli*).

*P. d. diomedea* is indeed the sub species generally known as the Mediterranean Shearwater.

#### THE TWO SMALLER SHEARWATERS.

(3) THE MANX SHEARWATER (*Procellaria puffinus*).—There are three sub species :—

(a) *Procellaria puffinus puffinus*—This breeds in the British Isles as well as further north and south, and concentrates in the eastern north Atlantic, and around the British Isles in spring and summer.

(b) *Procellaria puffinus mauretanicus*—This breeds in the Balearic Islands, but has been observed in the Biscay and Western Approach areas in the early autumn.

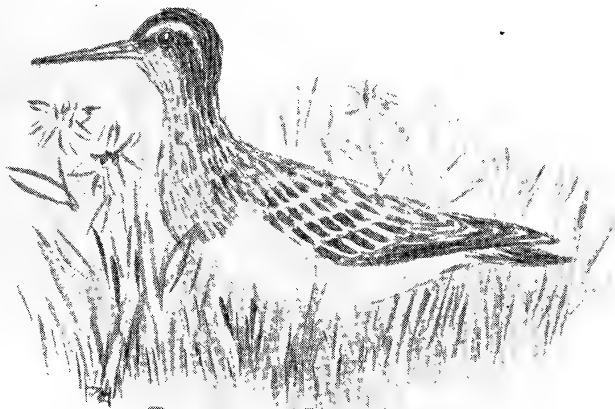
(c) *Procellaria puffinus yelkonan*—This breeds and is located around the Aegean Isles.

In sub species (a) and (b) the upper surfaces are slaty black, sides of head and neck mottled with grey, and underparts and under-surface of wings pure white. Bill is leaden blue, feet flesh coloured. In (c) the upper surfaces are noticeably brown (brown rather than black in appearance), and flanks brownish. In many cases the undersurfaces are almost uniformly brown, and the species might be mistaken for a Sooty Shearwater.

(4) THE SOOTY SHEARWATER (*Procellaria griseus*)—Like the Great Shearwater (*P. gravis*) this species is a migrant from the Southern hemisphere.

It is a rather scarce summer and autumn visitor to the North Atlantic, but may be seen in ones and twos around the British Isles and in the North Atlantic generally.

Its uniform sooty colouring both above and below, (except for a greyish white under wing surface), distinguish it at once from the above species. Its bill is black and feet slaty black.



Pectoral Sandpiper

C. E. HAMOND.

## JOY OF WADERS.

by Commander C. E. HAMOND, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.

Waders have been my first favourites since I fished and cockled as a child on Blackeney Harbour and could recognise all the common species by sight or sound before I was ten.

On leaving the sea one of the prerequisites in deciding on a home was that I should hear Curlew from my window at night. This I can do on the upper reaches of Portsmouth Harbour—and what a place it is.

Surrounded on all sides by Cities, Boroughs and Urban Districts, the mud flats afford feed and rest for many thousands of Curlew and Redshanks. In autumn large flocks of Dunlin and Ringed Plover are added, and a fluctuating population of Peewits.

On April 24th, almost to the day, the Whimbrel come. Every afternoon and evening for two or three weeks they circle high overhead calling incessantly. Then they are gone, to return punctually on July 24th. Their numbers increase through August and by mid September only stragglers are left. If you want to hear their music in winter row up any river or creek in West Africa and you will find them, with Common Sandpipers, sitting on the mangrove roots.

Black Tailed Godwits were uncommon here before the war when they started using our harbour in increasing numbers. In the post war years flocks of two to three hundred could be seen, and as many or more at Hill Head on the Solent. They also started to stay through the winter.

Bartails and Knots being sand lovers only favour us in small numbers, and I have never seen a Sanderling here.

Greenshanks are present in small numbers in Spring and Autumn. Occasionally one or two Curlew Sandpipers and, less frequently, Purple Sandpipers. I once lost my place rounding a mark in a race because there were four Purple Sandpipers sitting on the buoy!

I became familiar with the Spotted Redshank in Dunkerque in World War I, and have seen and heard them here on several occasions. Once we saw two Spotted Redshank and an Osprey in one day. The "Spotted" stands higher and more upright than the "Common" Redshank; he is an alert, vigorous bird with a loud cry of "do it!" He shows no white wing bar in flight, and his feet extend beyond his tail.

Ringed Plover in tightly packed bunches rest at high water year after year on the same spots. So do Grey Plover which do not show up until October, and then occupy a certain line of posts, one bird on each, with great regularity.

Turnstones are also conservative and rest, when the shingle banks are covered, on the mooring buoys in Portchester Creek to the number of sixty to a hundred.

What a delectable bird is the Turnstone. In the northern winter you may meet him in Australia, The South Pacific Islands, in Patagonia, the West Indies or the Cape. Yes, I know the American race is different, but not so that you or I would notice. His summer tortoiseshell coat and pied head and tail make up for his rather stumpy and round shouldered shape.

Common Sandpipers abound in season, but the "Green" is rare in this harbour. Golden Plovers are irregular; Oyster Catchers have always been scarce, one or two occasionally—but this year there have been thirty or more for most of the summer.

Looking over the beach below Navy House, Mombasa we saw about nine species of Waders which we can see in our own creek. That was when my wife admitted that she had never believed before "all this old migration stuff." What really made her homesick was a solitary Ringed Plover. This little bird above all others has every quality to make him a prime favourite. He is a master of neat and tasteful dress; his voice is sweet and restrained; his courtship a model of dignity, and his display flight a joy to watch.

One of the joys of the study of waders is that you can find them in any part of the world where tidal flats exist.

When next in Trincomalee, a trip to the salt pans at Niaveli will repay. There you will see great quantities of Waders—Sanderlings, Curlew Sandpipers, and several other familiar sorts besides. There, too, you will see Stilts and the Marsh Sandpiper, which is like a Greenshank scaled down to half size, note and all.

It is always a pleasure to meet the home Waders in distant lands—the piping of Greenshanks at sunset on the Loanda Lagoon in Angola, as it is in Newtown River, Isle of Wight. The music of the Curlew remains supreme wherever it is heard.

Waders with long legs extending beyond the tail are in all cases the most striking and graceful on the wing—Stilt, Avocet, Black Tailed Godwit and Greenshank are all a pleasure to watch on the wing, whereas Coots, Grebes and certain species of Tree Ducks, which have the same attribute, look ridiculous.

The minute and unassuming Little Stint cannot fail to thrill one when considering its vast journeys from the arctic tundras to the Cape.

One has memories of making the acquaintance of fresh members of the clan. The first sight of Little Ringed Plovers on the Dunkerque dunes; Dotterels on a Highland mountain; Kentish Plovers at Dunkerque, and again on a beach at Mombasa; a Pectoral Sandpiper which I sketched at close range on a Norfolk marsh; Ruffs feeding with Dunlin and Curlew Sandpipers on a marsh pool; the first meeting with Yellowshanks in the Argentine; again Yellowshanks with Hudsonian Curlew and Spotted Sandpipers in Trinidad. In Tobago I remember the recognition of a Solitary Sandpiper, and in Ceylon amongst thousands of Wood

Sandpipers and one single Green Sandpiper, there were some new Waders—two Sand Plovers, Eastern Golden Plover and Slender Billed Curlew.

Never to be forgotten was the beauty of the Avocets on Havergate Island.

But thinking it all over there is one sight that beats the lot ; that is the aerial drill of vast flocks of Dunlin and Knots—twisting, turning, rising and falling, now shining white and next moment invisible, every movement carried out with complete precision. When you have watched that you have seen one of the supreme wonders of bird life.

# THE WANDERING ALBATROSS.

## SOME NOTES ON ITS CAPTURE.

by Lieutenant Commander G. S. WILLIS, R.N.R.

The vessel was stopped in the Great Australian Bight, rolling easily to the long heaving swell coming in from the South West. Around the stern gathered quite a host of birds waiting for the periodic dumping of scraps from the galley. Amongst this hungry throng were Wandering Albatrosses, Black-browed Mollymawks, Giant Petrels, and a Storm Petrel, thought to be a Wilson's, besides other unidentified Petrels.

The National Institute of Oceanography having kindly supplied us with rings we were naturally keen to catch and ring as many birds as possible. We only had success with the Wandering Albatross. A Cape Pigeon did approach the bait, but the other species would not come near one.

The instructions received from the Institute gave the triangle method of catching Albatrosses. An isosceles triangle cut out of sheet tin with four inch sides was made and the line attached to the apex. The bait was wrapped round the base and secured with thread. This method was used with only a certain degree of success and one bird was brought aboard single handed from the well deck most successfully. Here however, the freeboard is only about six feet and the pull fairly horizontal until the last lift. The bird caught this way was completely unharmed.

Fishing from over the stern, where we had to make most of our attempts of necessity, the method was not so successful. The lift here was about twenty feet, and the bird though caught at first, invariably dropped off. This may have been due to the triangle being too thin and bending under the strain. A Wandering Albatross with both feet extended as brakes, and wings fully spread and flapping full speed astern, offers quite a resistance.

We have since cut two triangles out of aluminium, which is both rigid and light, but have had no opportunity yet to try them out.

A pamphlet that I picked up in Australia gave the triangle method of capture, but with the triangle slung by a bridle from the two base angles. In fact it is not a triangle but a "V", secured at the end of each leg. Evidently the idea here is to wedge the bill between the two legs of the "V" as they narrow towards the apex. The difficulty, I imagine, might be in getting the bird to seize the bait at the apex, and not to one side where the uneven pull might upset things.

We did use the hook method, but personally I cannot recommend it. The first time we tried it was reasonably successful; we used a large fish hook with the barb and point removed. The hook

lodged behind the sharp curve at the end of the upper mandible, and the bird was brought aboard quite easily. The end of the hook fetched a trace of blood where it bit into the bill, but the wound was quite superficial.

The second time however was not so good, and we decided not to use it again. These birds are very voracious feeders, and in this case, before we could get the strain on the line, the bird had the bait down its throat. As we tried to pull it away the hook lodged in the base of its tongue, and eventually we had no option but to hoist it aboard in this painful manner. We had to wedge its beak open with a piece of wood, and the whole thing was a difficult and unpleasant business. After the hook was removed the bird was quite docile, and paddled away when released. We hope it recovered.

The most noticeable thing, I feel, in picking up a Wandering Albatross, is its lightness. I had been prepared for a much heavier bird, but it was like carrying a feather pillow. Generally speaking they were very placid. We "de-bugged" them, measured them, and ringed them before releasing. As a precaution one hand was kept around the bill, which is very powerful with an extremely sharp cutting edge and point ; but they certainly showed no sign of trying to peck.

The down was beautiful in its silky sheen, and the pencilling or vermiculation of the back feathers wonderfully delicate. Deep indigo in colour and like fine lace work. The eyes also were very fine, lustrous black, and the pupils had something of a midnight blue about them, giving a translucent effect. They really are grand birds. We made the measurement of the wing span from nine feet to nine feet ten inches, rather less than in Alexander's "*Birds of the Ocean*" where it is given as ten feet to eleven feet six inches. Whether they happened to be smaller birds, or we failed to get the full stretch of wing I don't know.

It may have been coincidence, but we did notice that they came for the bait much more readily further South. This may have been because the birds were in larger numbers, flocks of twenty or so, against three or four off Cape Lecuwin . . . once a bird went for the bait the others immediately joined in.

When in large numbers the Wandering Albatrosses would come right up under the stern and attack the bait vigorously, two or three birds seizing the one bait and fighting over it—difficult for the fisherman ! At the time we were trying to coax a Pintado Petrel with a small triangle when an Albatross swallowed it whole. The light line broke and followed the triangle down the bird's throat. That bird, we thought, might have a painful geometrical problem ahead of it. Red meat, by the way, we found to be the most attractive bait.

When attacking the bait the Albatrosses made almost a barking



noise, with a deep throaty growling sound ; in fact the general sound was rather reminiscent of lion feeding time at the Zoo on a reduced scale. It was certainly nature in the raw, and the survival of the fittest.

The Wandering Albatross has been under observation on Macquarie Island. It's incubation period has not been published to my knowledge, but one would imagine it to be similar to the Royal Albatross which L. E. Rochdale quotes as from 231 to 243 days ! The mating display of the Wandering Albatross consists of a most remarkable dance. The male struts around the female his head and neck held low to the ground whilst he waves his head slowly from side to side. After a while the female joins in the dance ; then both birds indulge in mutual bill and neck rubbing. The actual display of the male consists of stretching his wings to their full extent whilst raising his body to its full height, and erecting the tail feathers. The wings are alternately vibrated and arched forward in a curve, and also folded and raised.

Our very short contact with the Wandering Albatross was most fascinating ; this bird is truly monarch of the air over the stormy waters of the Southern Oceans.

## BOOK REVIEW.

“ *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*,” by Roger Peterson, Guy Mountfort and P. A. D. Hollom. Collins, 25/-.

Here is a first class up-to-date guide book for the field observer, of a size which can go in any jacket pocket (a distinct advantage), profusely illustrated, which provides a good deal more than a sure means of identifying all European birds this side of Russia. Colonel A. J. S. Tuke, one of our members, writes of this book—“ Not only are the many illustrations artistic as well as accurate, but those on the same page are all reproduced to scale. Roger Peterson has also included the ingenious device of drawing a small line pointing to the birds’ chief characteristic. This is particularly helpful in such birds as the Ringed, Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers for example, all of which can often be seen consorting together at the mouths of rivers in France and Spain. A most useful feature is the provision of sketches of birds of prey viewed from below, and the authors have introduced a novel feature in accompanying the description of many birds with a map of Europe with areas shaded in which these birds are likely to be found.”

“ *Sea Birds*,” by James Fisher and R. M. Lockley. Collins, 25/-.

Covering essentially the sea birds of the North Atlantic Ocean from equator to pole, the book does far more than merely list and describe the birds. It embodies an immense amount of research and detail. Not only is it excellently illustrated with colour and natural photographs but the world breeding distribution of all these sea birds is shown in newly devised maps. The structure of the Atlantic Ocean, its tidal streams and winds in relation to sea birds, the evolution, numbers, movements and social behaviour of these birds are all dealt with. Notes on non breeders and casuals, and many anecdotes are included. For the serious student it is a book crammed with information.

“ *Pastures New*,”—A Wildflower Naturalist in North-West Germany, by Jeffrey G. Harrison. H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd.

Everyone who has read Jeffrey Harrison’s first book “ *Estuary Saga* ” will certainly want to read his latest sequel to it “ *Pastures New*.” In it the Author takes us beyond the limits of the Elbe estuary and unfolds a larger map in which both historical background and acute observations of an ardent Ornithologist are combined. Heligoland, Borkum (known to many Naval Officers, whose most important paraphernalia during a few days leave there from duty in Germany consisted of gun and cartridge belt), Scholeswig-Holstein, The Jade Basin, to mention a few happy hunting grounds, are laid before us. We are given a vivid picture of the

astonishing variety and numbers of birds arriving, pausing for a period and passing on. This is a book for the bedside ; to dip into, lay aside, and enjoy again. At the end one feels that one has been with the Author, watching more birds through glasses than waiting for wildfowl with a loaded gun.

“Naturalist” is a wide term and no butterfly distracted the Author’s attention, but Roe Deer are bigger game than Camberwell Beauties.

---

## 1953 ANNUAL REPORT—“NOTES FROM ABROAD”

### *A CORRECTION.*

In our 1953 report under the title “Tasman Sea” we much regret having misquoted G. S. Willis’s actual report. We stated that it was the Giant Petrel (*Macronectes giganteus*) which definitely follows ships at sea. This bird, of course, habitually follows ships, but the bird which G. S. Willis was calling attention to in this respect in his report was The Great-Winged or Grey-faced (as it is sometimes called) Petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera*). It was these birds also which were doing aerobatics around the ship.—*Ed.*

---

## NOTES RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS.

We wish to acknowledge notes received from the following members and not recorded elsewhere :—

Commander (S) C. E. Smith, R.N. ... Further notes from Korea.

Sub Lieut. Powys Maurice, R.N. ... Further notes from Korea.

Senior Commissioned Engineer W. ... Notes on passage U.K. to  
E. Glass, R N Singapore.

Sub-Lieut. C. B. Thompson, ... Notes and Photographs of  
R.N.R. Sea birds.

Sub-Lieut. M. B. Casement, R.N. ... Area Report—Iceland,  
1953.

*Twenty-four*

# R.N.B.W.S. REFERENCE BOOK LIST.

(REVISED 1954).

AREA.	TITLE.	AUTHOR.	PUBLISHER.
WORLD'S OCEANS.	* <i>Birds of the Ocean.</i> *Supplied to Ships' Reference Libraries. American New Edition £3. Cheaper new edition being printed in U.K. not yet available.	W. B. Alexander.	Putnam & Co., 42 Great Russell St., London, W.C.1. 1928.
NORTH ATLANTIC.	<i>Sea Birds.</i>	J. Fisher. R. M. Lockley.	25/-. Collins, 14 St. James Place, London, S.W.1. 1954.
BRITISH ISLES.	1. <i>The Popular Handbook of British Birds.</i>	P. A. D. Hollom.	45/-. H.F. & G. Witherby, Ltd., 5 Warwick Court, London, W.C.1. 1952.
	2. <i>Collins Pocket Guide to British Birds.</i>	R. S. R. Fitter. R. A. Richardson.	21/-. Collins. 1952.
	3. <i>Bird Recognition.</i> Vols. 1, 2 (3).	J. Fisher.	Pelican Series. 1947-1951.
IRELAND.	<i>The Birds of Ireland.</i>	Kennedy. Rutledge. Scroope.	42/-. W. & G. Foyle, Ltd., 119 Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.2. 1954.
BRITAIN AND ALL EUROPE.	<i>A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe.</i>	R. Peterson. G. Mountfort. P. A. D. Hollom.	25/-. Collins. 1954.
SOUTHERN SPAIN AND GIBRALTAR.	<i>An introduction to the Birds of Southern Spain and Gibraltar.</i>	A. J. S. Tuke.	5/-. Garrison Library Printing Offices, 2 Library Gdns., Gibraltar. 1953.
PORTUGAL.	<i>The Birds of Portugal.</i>	W. C. Tait.	16/6. H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd. 1924.
SOUTH AFRICA.	<i>The Birds of South Africa.</i>	A. Roberts.	35/-. H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd. 1942.
WEST AFRICA.	1. <i>Handbook of the Birds of West Africa.</i>	G. L. Bates.	30/-. John Bole & Sons & Daniels Ltd., London. 1930.
	2. <i>The Birds of West and Equatorial Africa</i> (2 Vols.)	D. A. Bannerman.	£6s. 6s. Oliver & Boyd. 1953.

*Twenty-five*

AREA.	TITLE.	AUTHOR.	PUBLISHER.
CEYLON.	1. <i>Manual of Ceylon Birds.</i>	W. E. Wait.	15/-.
	2. <i>Bird Life in Ceylon.</i>	Mrs. Cicely Lushington.	
INDIA.	1. <i>Popular Handbook of Indian Birds.</i>	H. Whistler	22/6. Gurney & Jackson, London. 1941.
	2. <i>The Book of Indian Birds.</i>	S. Ali.	Bombay Nat. Hist. Society. 1944.
HONG KONG.	<i>Birds of Hong Kong.</i>	G. A. C. Herklots.	
MALAYA, SINGAPORE, PENANG.	<i>The Birds of the Malay Peninsula, Singapore and Hong Kong.</i>	A. G. Glenistor.	35/-.
PACIFIC.	<i>Birds of the South-west Pacific.</i>	Ernst Mayr.	22/6. The Macmillan Coy., New York. 1945.
JAPAN.	<i>Handlist of Japanese Birds.</i>	M. Hachisuto.	5/9. Ornith. Soc., Japan, c/o Zool : Inst. Science College, Japanese University, Tokio.
AUSTRALIA.	<i>What Bird is that? (A guide to the Birds of Australia).</i>	N. W. Cayley.	12/6. Angus & Robertson Ltd., Sydney. 1931.
NEW ZEALAND	1. <i>New Zealand Birds.</i>	W. R. B. Oliver.	30/-. Fine Arts (N. Z.) Ltd., Wellington. N.Z. 1930.
	2. <i>New Zealand Birds and how to identify them.</i>	P. Honcrieff.	Whitecombe & Tombe Ltd., Auckland, N.Z. 1928.
U.S.A.	1. <i>Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America.</i>	F. M. Chapman.	21/- D. Appleton & Co., New York.
	2. <i>A Field Guide to Western Birds.</i>	R. Peterson.	14/6. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, U.S.A. 1939.
	3. <i>The Audubon Water Birds.</i>	R. H. Pough.	Doubleday, U.S.A.
CANADA.	<i>Birds of Canada.</i>	P. A. Taverner.	Nat. Museum of Canada, Ottawa. 1931.
WEST INDIES.	<i>Birds of the West Indies.</i>	J. Bond.	22/- Academy of Nat. Science, Philadelphia. 1936.
MALTA	<i>The Birds of Malta</i>	E. L. Roberts	12/6. Progress Press Coy. Ltd. 1954.